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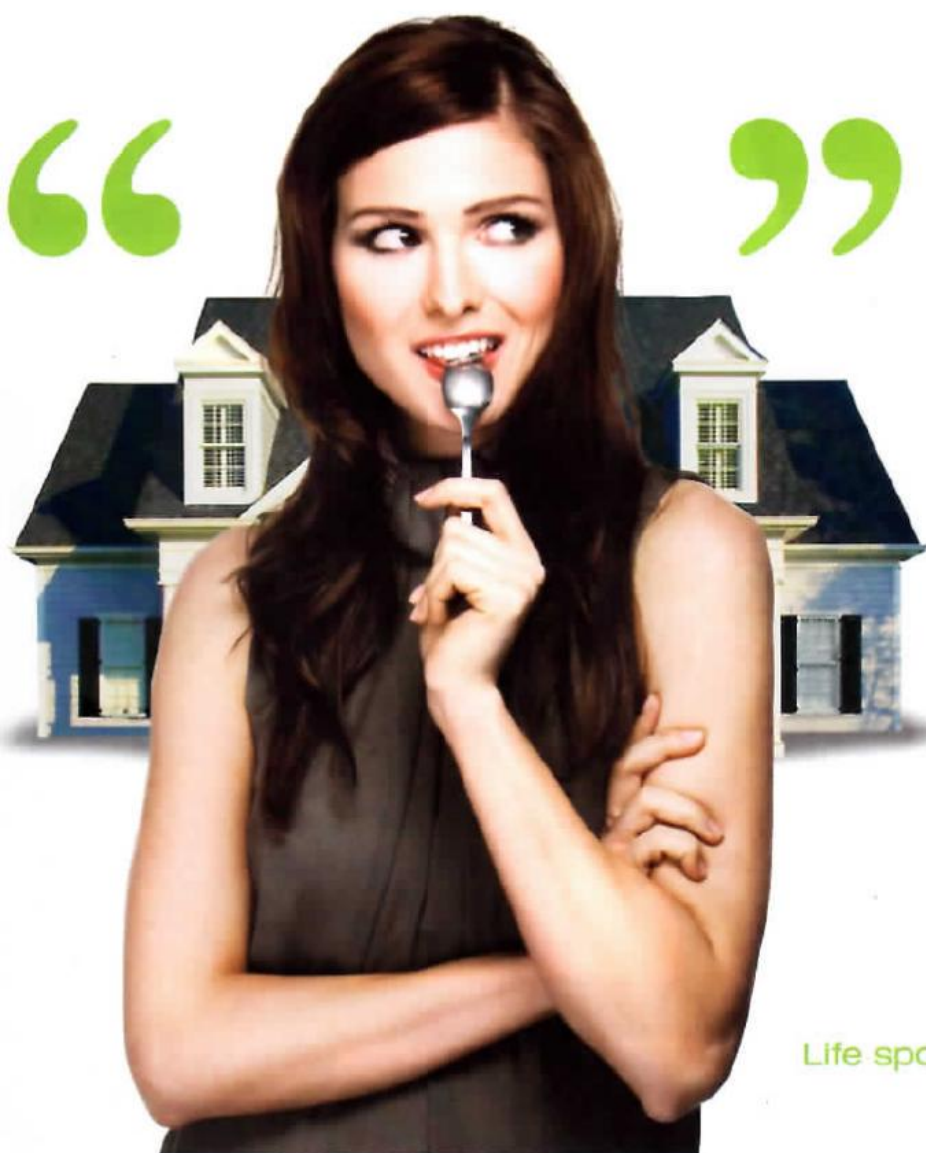
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Good Reasons Why We're Booming**Cover:** The renovated kitchen of Sarah Robbins and Jeff Hehn, with architect Heney Klypak. See story on page 33.Unless noted otherwise, all stories and photographs in *Saskatoon Home* are by Darrell Noakes

Home Revitalization

HOME

Renovate, restore, revitalize, regenerate, re-create, rejuvenate, revive. However we want to express it, people are more than ever choosing to revitalize their homes. The reasons are as varied as the individuals and the abodes that undergo transformation. A heritage structure can be restored so it

resembles its former magnificent self. An existing building can be converted into something very new and unique, incorporating old and new elements. A home can be revitalized and transformed into something that uniquely reflects the personalities and needs of its inhabitants.

Another reason for home regeneration is to preserve a sense of place, of belonging. To many, great comfort comes in feeling a sense of solidity, of roots.

Again, we thank our advertisers for their ongoing support. Please utilize the services of these experienced and talented professionals in the home trade who can help you turn your dwelling into something wonderful.

We also wish to announce the debut of Regina Home, our sister publication. The province's capital, along with Saskatoon, is leading the nation in terms of growth and prosperity. We couldn't think of a more deserving city to join us in the celebration of the places in which we live. Saskatchewan also happens to be the country's hottest province at the moment. Viva, Saskaboom!

Enjoy this issue and enjoy your own home!

Dona Sturmanis
Senior Editor

Issue 5, Spring 2009

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FRONTLINES

Shifting Towards Sustainable Housing

Curtis Olson, the developer who, along with Peter Olson and Ian Stark of Olstar Developments, transformed the Fairbanks Morse Building into luxury lofts, has launched a new company dedicated to sustainable development in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods.

Olson founded Shift Development Corporation Inc. in February.

The name is inspired by his desire to shift the city towards a new residential development path, says Olson.

"It's a shift towards modern, green and affordable lifestyles through in-fill development," he says.

His first project undertaken through the new company is a development on Avenue F South in Riversdale that he named The Shift Home.

"I'm designing an in-fill house for Saskatoon that addresses affordability and requirements for home office or home studio space that's intended to be deployed throughout in-fill neighbourhoods such as Caswell Hill, Riversdale,

Nutana and City Park," he says.

The housing is designed for people with smaller families and those who integrate their living and working routines, he explains.

"I see a huge opportunity for doing more in-fill development with flexible live/work space that's affordable, that can be put in any neighbourhood and downtown," he adds. "That's got me really excited and really looking forward right now."

"I'm designing it so that it can be deployed as urban townhouses, urban row houses, or two-storey structures in higher density, like you'd see in a city like Portland or Seattle or Vancouver or even St. Petersburg, Florida," he says. "That's the creative housing strategy of the future to make downtown not just a very sustainable and healthy place to live, but also a creative and vibrant and energetic city to live in. People bring the energy, density brings more people and more energy, and that makes it an amazing place to live."

It's a direction in which Saskatoon is evolving, says Olson's wife, singer Carrie Catherine.

"If you think about all the conversations that are happening right now about sustainable

development and urban development for healthy, vital cities, it means that we need to attract entrepreneurs (who) want unique spaces to live and work in," she says.

The Shift Home can spark the desire for more of that, she adds.

The couple has also acquired a former church on Avenue G South that they are turning into creative studio space for artists. "The Charch" will be used by painters, craftspeople and other artists.

"We already have the place over half filled with people that are using it as a creative space," says Olson. "That's another version of fulfilling the needs of people in the 21st century and having this great creative environment."

"I'm really excited about the future of that area," he says.

For more information on these projects, see the websites www.theshifthome.com, www.shiftdevelopment.com and www.charch.ca.

■ DARRELL NOAKES

A Record Year for Saskatchewan Construction

Construction sites around Saskatchewan were very busy in

2008 according to a report released by Statistics Canada, setting an all-time annual record of \$2.2 billion.

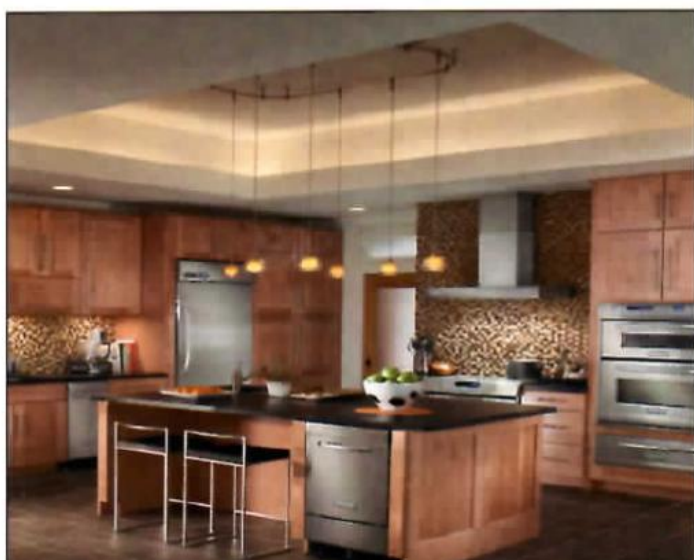
Building permits in the province totalled \$2.2 billion in 2008, up 32.8 per cent when compared with the totals for 2007 (seasonally unadjusted). This beats the former record of \$1.6 billion set in 2007. Saskatchewan had the largest percentage increase amongst the provinces in 2008, well ahead of the 5.3 per cent decline on the national front for the same period.

■ PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

Housing Will Continue to Moderate Across Canada in 2009

Housing starts reached 211,056 units in 2008, a decrease from 228,343 in 2007, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) first quarter Housing Market Outlook, Canada Edition report. Starts are expected to be about 160,250 for 2009 and about 163,350 for 2010.

"The new home market is moderating due to a number of key factors," said Bob Dugan, chief economist for CMHC. "The economic downturn will



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result in a decrease in demand for home ownership leading to a decline in housing starts and existing home sales in 2009. Housing market activity will begin to strengthen as the Canadian economy rebounds in 2010 and the level of housing starts over the forecast period will be more in line with demographic fundamentals."

Existing home sales, as measured by the Multiple Listing Service (MLS), are expected to decline 14.6 per cent during 2009 to 370,500 units. In 2010 the level of MLS sales is expected to increase by 9.3 per cent to 405,000 units. The average MLS price is also expected to decrease over the course of 2009. Average prices are forecast to be \$287,900 for 2009, a decline of 5.2 per cent, while 2010 will see little change from 2009 average prices.

■ CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Commercial Building Permits Up, Residential Permits Down

Following a trend in most cities, the value of residential building permits in Saskatoon dropped from November to December last year, according to a federal government report.

Statistics Canada reported in February that while building permits in the Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) rose by 27.6 per cent in value

overall during November and December, 2008, the increase was primarily a result of non-residential construction. The value of industrial, commercial and institutional permits rose 65.9 per cent during that period. Residential permits, on the other hand, dipped by 50 per cent in value.

Statistics Canada attributes the drop in residential permits to a reduction in the number of building permits taken out for single family homes.

■ STATISTICS CANADA

House Prices Steady and Demand Strong

Saskatoon home sales declined 29 per cent in January, compared with the same month a year ago, but 31 per cent higher than December, reports a February news release from the Saskatoon Region Association of Realtors (SRAR).

Saskatoon real estate agents sold 213 homes in January, compared with 300 during the same period last year and 162 residential units in December.

"Unit sales are on par with 2007 and ahead of 2005 and 2006," SRAR reported.

"The average selling price remained steady at \$278,545 an increase of 7 per cent from January 2008 when the average selling price was \$259,334. This increase indicates continued demand for mid to upper price range homes."



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The average residential price is derived by taking the month's dollar volume of homes sold and dividing that number by the unit sales number.

There were 1156 homes listed at the end of January, down substantially from September, when inventory levels peaked at 1,748, SRAR reported. January inventory levels were higher than the same period last year, when 324 homes were available for purchase.

Total real estate sales of \$59,330,000 were reported in January, down 24 per cent from 2008 sales of \$77,800,000.

"The \$300,000 to \$350,000 price range continues to see the greatest sales activity followed closely by the \$250,000 to

\$300,000 price range," SRAR reported. In January eight homes sold for more than \$500,000.

The real estate association said consumer confidence in the Saskatoon economy remains steady.

"Markets are cyclical and the market in Saskatoon is at a low point and should begin to return to normal in the next few months.

"The Saskatoon market is not exempt from global economic pressures but well positioned to weather these economic times. The most recent announcements by the provincial government to support municipalities with infrastructure support is great news for

Saskatoon, as infrastructure spending assists in stimulating the economy.

"The federal government's increase in the amount buyers may use in the Home Buyers Plan will also encourage many first time buyers to enter the market place. Realtors across Canada have lobbied the government for more than eight years to see this increase to be approved by government. Realtors continue to lobby the federal government for the Home Buyers Plan to extend to all buyers not just first time buyers."

■ SASKATOON REGION
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS

ISC Reduces Fees in 2009 to Save Residents Money

Information Services Corporation (ISC) has reduced the *ad valorem* rate for a number of Land Registry transactions, effective January 12, 2009. These fee reductions will save Saskatchewan people approximately \$1.8 million annually.

"The fee reductions are a direct response to customer feedback ISC received during customer consultations conducted in spring 2008," said Crown corporations minister Ken Cheveldayoff. "Combined with fee eliminations already implemented in August 2008, Sas-

katchewan people will be saving approximately \$4.7 million annually."

Many ISC customers will benefit from the reduction of fees from 0.3 per cent of title value to 0.1 per cent of title value for the following specific transactions in the Land Registry:

The first instance of raising title from surface to condominium status;

Title and parcel consolidations and subdivisions where at least one owner remains the same before and after the transaction; and

Adding or removing a joint tenant from title, where at least one joint tenant remains the same before and after the transaction.

ISC is the provincial Crown corporation responsible for the administration of land titles, survey, personal property and vital statistics registries, as well as related geographic information and mapping systems.

■ PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon Housing Deemed Unaffordable by Survey

Saskatoon's housing affordability dropped seriously in the past two years, according to an international survey released by the Frontier Centre for Public Policy in January.

The centre classified Saskatoon as "seriously unafford-

able," giving the city a rating of 4.6, determined as the ratio of median house price to median income. Two years ago, Saskatoon's affordability rating was 2.6.

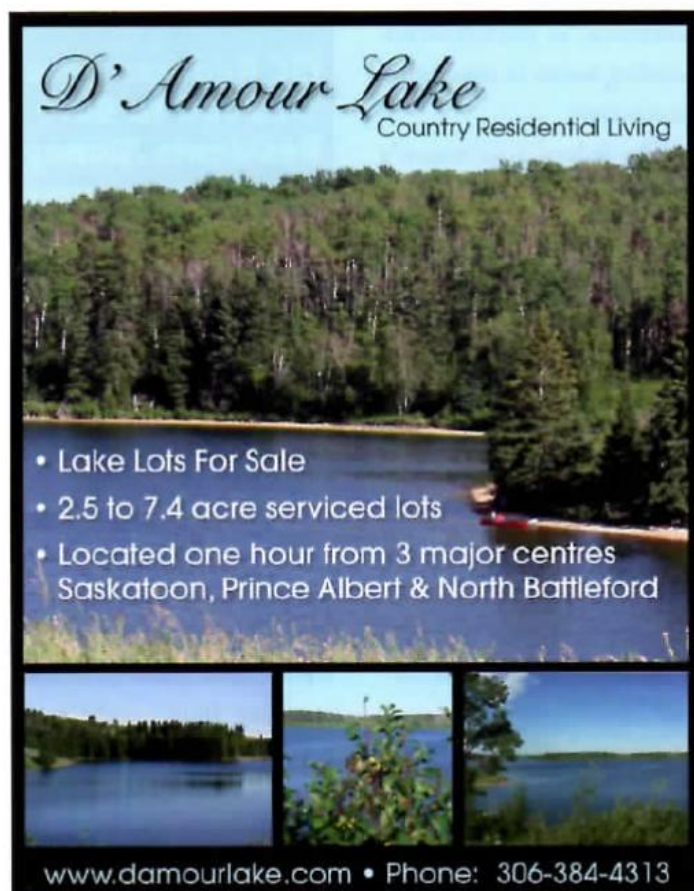
The rating places Saskatoon 27th down the list of Canadian cities and 182 internationally, tying with cities in northern United Kingdom and southern California. In Canada, Montreal earned the same rating. Vancouver, for example, rated 8.4, earning a rank in the "severely unaffordable" category, making that city the most unaffordable in Canada. The Canadian average was 3.5 in the third quarter of 2008, when the survey was done.

The fifth annual Demographia International Housing

Affordability Survey is authored by New Zealand's Hugh Pavletich and the USA's Wendell Cox. The survey observes dramatic trends in US markets that point to future Canadian trends.

Recent upheavals in housing markets across the globe mean that this fifth annual survey shows the largest year on year changes since the survey began.

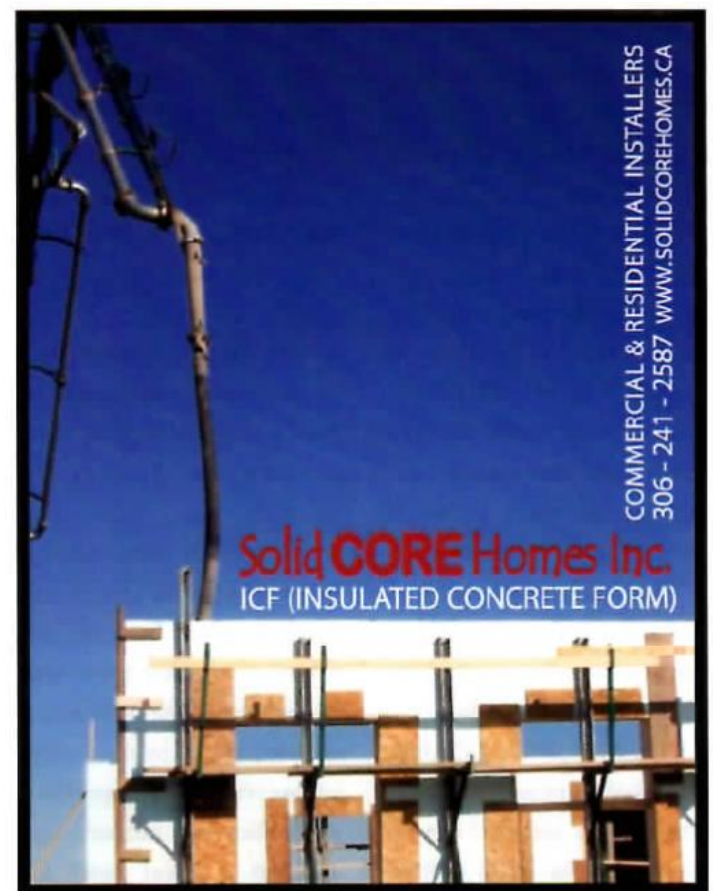
The extent to which local authorities make land and development possibilities open to developers and would be home buyers affects the affordability of housing more than any other factor. The most basic economic analysis is crystal clear that constraints in supply lead to increased prices.



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In light of the current world financial situation, land supply constraints, high prices, and high volatility are a significant piece of the puzzle in explaining financial collapse. Higher prices for houses, while often welcomed by existing home owners, are an affordability obstacle to non home owners and ultimately increase volatility in housing markets because high prices have further to fall when economic conditions change. When those prices are created by artificial supply constraints on urban land, such as "Smart Growth" policies adopted by many Canadian municipalities, this volatility is unnecessary and dangerous.

The survey's authors say that questionable city planning policies have contributed to low supply and high prices.

Canada has had a milder experience than that of the USA over the past year, but underlying trends point to Canadian housing markets being equally vulnerable to changes in economic conditions.

Canadian cities, such as Saskatoon, which have experienced strong economic growth, have found their affordability slipping rapidly.

The report says that Canada has so far escaped the bubble-and-bust trend seen in the United States in recent years. However, the ratios of price to income seen in major Canadian markets and the affordability trends observed when Canadian housing markets experience

rapid economic growth suggest that artificial supply constraints applied on this side of the border are setting the Canadian mortgage industry up for a similar fall.

FRONTIER CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY, *Fifth Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey*

City Houses to Help Habitat for Humanity

Saskatoon has donated seven homes on the site of the Pleasant Hill revitalization to Habitat for Humanity. City council voted unanimously at its January 26 meeting to donate the houses, for a nominal fee of \$1, for the charity to auction the buildings as part of its fund raising efforts.

The houses currently occupy Parcel E on 20th Street West, part of the Pleasant Hill Revitalization Concept Plan, which is to be developed as a high density, residential high-rise with commercial uses at grade level. The parcel will be offered to developers through a request for proposals in fall, 2009. The city purchased the houses from Wolfe Construction properties located on the 1400 block of 20th Street West.

Auctioning the housing stock is intended to help raise funds for Habitat for Humanity and to save good housing stock for use elsewhere in the city.

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City Releases Affordable Housing Report

Fast Consulting has prepared the research summary "Affordable Housing in Saskatoon: Industry Perceptions and Experiences" for the City of Saskatoon.

Industry and stakeholders are generally satisfied in their dealings with the City on affordable housing projects, the report states, noting that there are challenges related to lack of awareness of incentives that encourage affordable housing development.

The report also notes some confusion over which level of government – municipal, provincial, federal – is responsible for funding.

"Some organizations, particularly those with less experience, find navigating building code standards and zoning by-laws confusing," the report says.

■ CITY OF SASKATOON

Building Permits Continue Upward Trend

Saskatchewan building permits continued on the upward trajectory with the latest figures showing an 8.8 per cent increase totalling \$150 million for November 2008 up from October 2008 on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The report released by Statistics Canada in January, shows that when compared to Novem-

ber 2007, the November 2008 seasonally adjusted figure is a 26.6 per cent increase, the highest among the provinces.

"These figures show that builders and buyers continue to have strong confidence in the resiliency of the Saskatchewan economy," said advanced education, employment and labour minister Rob Norris said on behalf of enterprise and innovation minister Lyle Stewart. "Despite the tough economic times, we are pleased to see that many of our economic sectors continue to perform way above average."

Non-residential permits in Saskatchewan increased by 59.9 per cent for a total of \$80 million seasonally adjusted, which was the highest among the provinces.

Compared to other western provinces Saskatchewan's overall increase of 26.6 per cent was far ahead of decreases in Manitoba (-5.9 per cent), Alberta (-14.5 per cent) and BC (-32.6 per cent).

■ PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

Affordable Housing Complex Opens for Seniors

Juniper Manor, a three-storey residential building featuring 43 new rental units, officially opened in Saskatoon in January for seniors in need of low-cost housing.

"Building stability, increasing affordability and enhancing the quality of housing are critical

supports that must be in place to ensure that all Saskatchewan people, including seniors, benefit from our prosperous economy," said social services minister Donna Harpauer. "Juniper Manor will be a place of comfort and security for its residents, and our government is proud to help make a difference in the lives of the senior members of this community."

"The City of Saskatoon is very proud to support affordable housing projects like Juniper Manor," said Saskatoon Mayor Donald Atchison. "Not only will Juniper Manor provide much needed low-cost housing for seniors by utilizing a once-vacant site in the revitalizing Riversdale neighbourhood but

it also helps to ensure citizens have a home in our growing, thriving city now, and into the future."

The project, which was undertaken by Juniper Housing Corporation, cost approximately \$4.8 million, with \$2.9 million from Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and \$322,400 from the City of Saskatoon. The funding balance was provided through mortgage financing, community fundraising, land and in-kind contributions. Additional funding was provided by the City of Saskatoon through their Enterprise Zone incentives, such as tax abatements and rebates totalling over \$68,000. Juniper's partners and supporters include

the Saskatoon Chinese Benevolent Association, Saskatoon Chinese Cultural Association, Chinese Ladies' Association, along with AODBT Architectural Interior Design and North Ridge Development Corporation.

Juniper Manor is located in Riversdale and consists of 10 studio, nine bachelor and 24 one-bedroom units. The project features Asian architecture to reflect the traditions of the community. The building is currently undergoing occupancy.

■ PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

New Financing for Geothermal and Power Systems

The provincial government has developed a suite of programs designed to encourage the use of environmentally responsible energy sources.

The suite includes a new loan program for people who install a Canadian Geotexchange Coalition (CGC) certified geothermal heating system or generate their own power from renewable sources such as wind or solar.

"These programs will provide financial support to the growing number of Saskatch-



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ewan people who want to heat their homes with geothermal or power their homes with alternative energy sources," says Crown corporations minister Ken Cheveldayoff. "Encouraging smaller-scale, environmentally responsible generation is part of our commitment to curb greenhouse gas emissions and ensure our province has a sustainable and reliable energy supply mix, as outlined in our Go Green Plan."

Those eligible can receive a loan for up to \$25,000 for installing a geothermal system and a loan of up to \$25,000 for installing a renewable system in a new or existing home. The program, effective immediately, will be delivered through SaskPower Eneraction — the utility's portfolio of energy efficiency, conservation and load management programs.

Enhancements have been made to the existing Energy Efficiency Rebate for New Homes Program delivered through SaskEnergy. Saskatchewan residents who build a new Energy Star qualified, R-2000 certified or Energuide 80 home may be eligible to receive a rebate of up to \$3,500 for the installation of a geothermal system. The rebate, retroactive to January 1, 2008, is the largest rebate for new homes offered in Canada.

The province is also topping up support to the Net Metering Program. Residents who wish to self-generate electricity using environmentally-friendly sources, such as wind or solar, could now receive a rebate of up to \$35,000, retroactive to April 1, 2007.

A geothermal rebate program is also being designed for commercial customers. This program will be introduced in the spring of 2009.

Information about these loan and rebate programs is available at saskpower.com.

■ PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

SUPPLIERS

Create or Reincarnate Furnishings That Are True to You

We often hear that decorating styles are becoming more eclectic. Letting your personal tastes show in the ways you finish your interior can be much more rewarding when you abandon “cookie cutter” shopping.

You’ve been to all the showrooms, but the furnishings and accessories look pretty much alike. The catalogues are even worse. Let’s face it, those big companies didn’t become successful by taking unnecessary chances. They played it safe by capitalizing on popular trends. It’s the tyranny of the lowest common denominator. Sure, you can find stuff that looks nice, even great, but it just isn’t *you*.

Follow your own style. Creating new designs from scratch, customizing traditional looks and refurbishing worn-out favourites can give your home new appeal that’s also long lasting.

Custom designs aren’t for everyone, says Dale Muchowski,

an experienced furniture maker and owner of Taylor Made Furniture, a family business he has operated with wife Donelda since 1991. Nevertheless, there are a lot of people who are looking for something different, he says, and the demand for unique designs created by these types of local businesses is growing.

“There are more people who want something unique,” says Muchowski. “At one point, everybody wanted basically the same thing. Now people are getting a little more adventurous with their decorating and spending more on their furniture and interiors of their homes.”

There’s good value in custom furniture. Solid, well-constructed pieces can stand up to

a lifetime of use. They can be repaired and refinished to maintain their value. That also makes them much more sustainable, both economically and environmentally.

Lately, people are finding contemporary or clean-lined design in furniture most appealing, Muchowski says.

“The traditional style, at one point, is what everyone seemed to want,” he says. “Then we kind of moved into Mission more because it’s very down-to-earth design, very simple, very good construction.”

Taylor Made manufactures kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom furniture, including dining tables, chairs, buffets, coffee and end tables, love seats and sofas. The company’s focus is on custom de-

sign-furniture in contemporary, traditional and Mission styles, all handmade in woods such as oak, maple, birch, mahogany, black walnut, cherry, beech and sapele, a reddish brown African wood very similar to mahogany.

It can be hard for people to visualize how custom furniture might look. Partly, that’s why they buy pieces styled by familiar trends. Even custom-made pieces need to start with examples that people can look at.

“We have a showroom here,” says Muchowski. “Pieces are on display. Generally when someone comes in, they might choose one of our styles or do variations to the style – different colours, different woods within that style. They may select different shapes of tops or bases. They customize it based on what we have here.”

Reincarnate Furniture by Renewing

While new custom-built furniture can appeal to a broad range of tastes, it’s especially worthwhile for growing or newly-established households. A lot of people have good furniture that,



The ultimate in individual style is a custom-made table.
Photo: Dale Muchowski, Taylor Made Furniture

rather than being replaced, can be given new life.

More people are interested in re-upholstering their worn furniture, says Daryl Nichols, an upholsterer at Mr. Schlitt Upholstery.

"I think a lot of people are learning that cheap furniture doesn't last," he says. "Once they've bought a new piece and it falls apart, then they think they'll just get an old solid piece and get it redone."

Starting with solidly-built furniture is important. Getting well-built furniture now will pay dividends down the road, especially if it can last for 20 years or so before it needs to be re-upholstered. A lot of the furniture parents or grandparents pass down the generations would

make suitable candidates, too. However, bargains can be sought at used furniture stores, antique shops and garage sales, says Nichols.

The best piece will have a hardwood frame, or at least a good, solid frame.

"That's the main thing, as long as you have a good frame — and good springs," says Nichols. "We can put in new padding. We can even put new springs in. We can repair frames, too, but it's easier if you've got a good frame and good springs."

"Tip them upside down and pull the dust cover off, see if the main part of the frame is hardwood or good wood. It doesn't necessarily have to be hardwood, but 'solid' wood, not thin plywood."

Look for screws and dowels with glue holding the frame together, he adds.

If the item is a period piece or a family heirloom, you'll probably want to maintain its character, so that re-upholstering returns it to its former glory. If the aesthetics aren't important for heritage or sentimental value, even the most conservative, unattractive piece can undergo remarkable transformation.

"We can change the frame and pillows to make it look more modern," says Nichols. "It depends on the furniture. Some people want it to look old. They want it to look the same as what it was. But some people want to modernize it, so you can do some changes to the frame and to the upholstery to make it look

more contemporary."

"It'll last you 15 or 20 years or so," he says. That's a lot better value than running out to buy a cheap set every two or three years."

Express Yourself Clearly with Customized Glass

For something completely different, there's glass. It can add texture, shape mood, sculpt light, define space, and introduce new design elements.

For example, thick laminated glass counter tops and textured glass cabinet doors can create a unique style in the kitchen. It can create lighter tones and a refreshing atmosphere that can't be achieved with stone or ceramic tile.

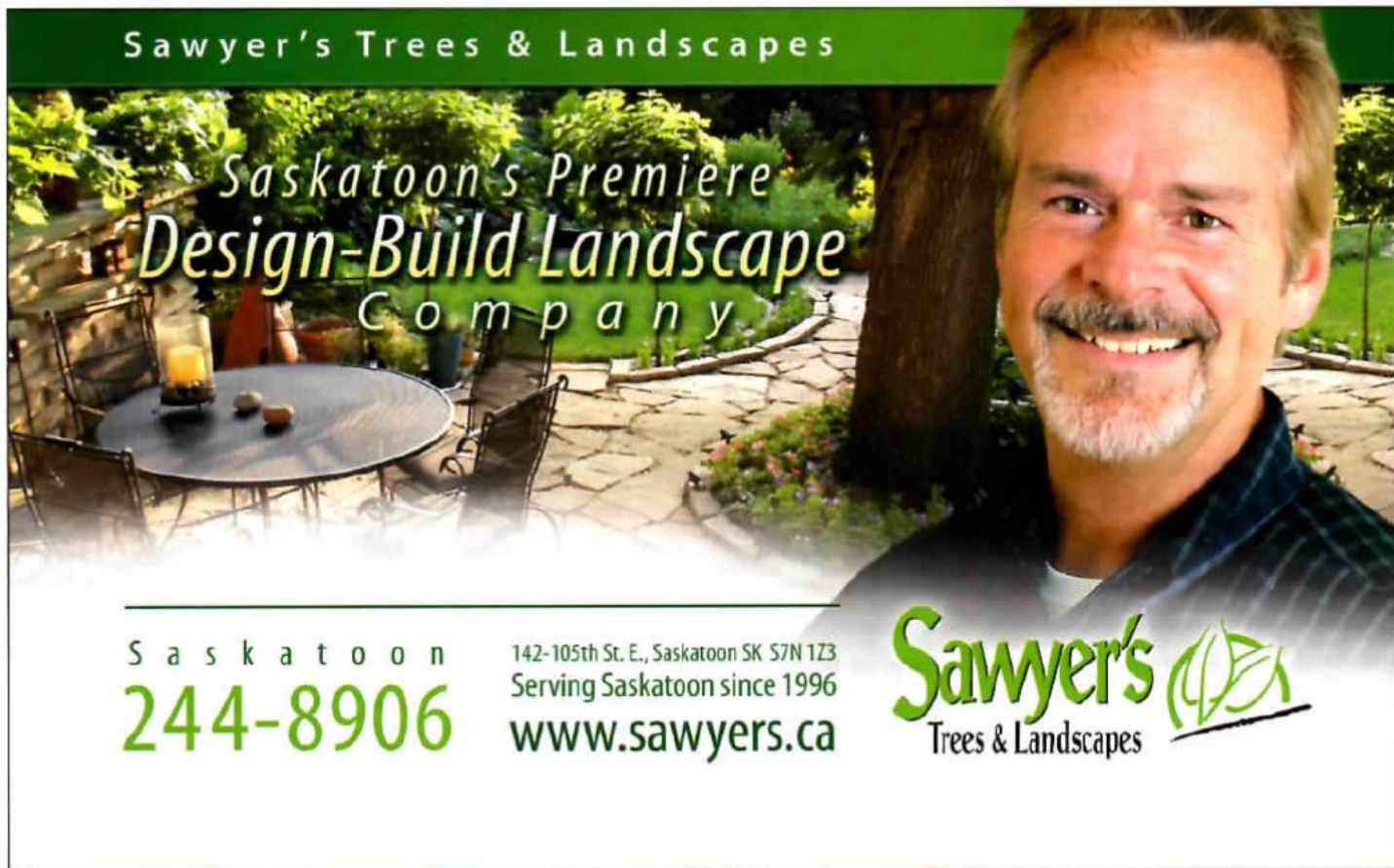
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Glass panels, instead of wooden balusters, give handrails a richer look, says Janet Silzer owner of Saskatoon's SGO Designer Glass franchise. The company has been working with glass for more than 35 years.

"I make a suggestion to my clients to have textured glass," she says. "If you have just starfire glass, which is clear glass, then you're always getting fingerprints showing."

The company recently became a supplier of Saskatchewan Roughriders memorabilia, creating glass works that include the football team's official design.

"We're going to do anything that you want with the Roughriders logo on it," she says.

She's thinking of creating a decorative fireplace surround, among other types of glass products.

Textured glass takes on an entirely different look when the edges are designed with curves.

"For shower glass, the sculpted edges give it a nice finish," she says. "You can do room dividers. You can have LEDs at the bottom and sand-blasted glass at the top, with the sculpted edges, so you'll see the highlights."

Glass shower doors can be complemented by a glass basin and decorative panels in the cabinetry or the mirror.

"When I first started, people didn't realize the extent of how glass can be used in different applications, colours and textures. When people thought

glass, they thought of plain old glass. Back in the 70s, you had your coffee tables with the glass insert. That's what they're thinking now.

"There are so many applications for glass now," she adds. "It's so exciting. Anything that you want done in glass, can be (done). It's just endless."

■ DARRELL NOAKES

The Details

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www.taylormadefurniture.ca

■ Mr Schlitt Upholstery

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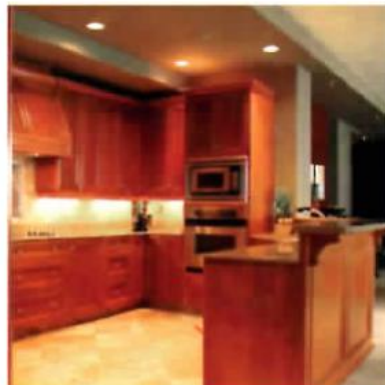
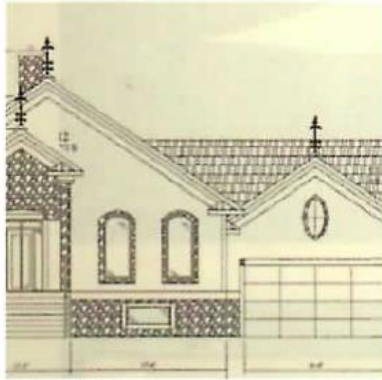
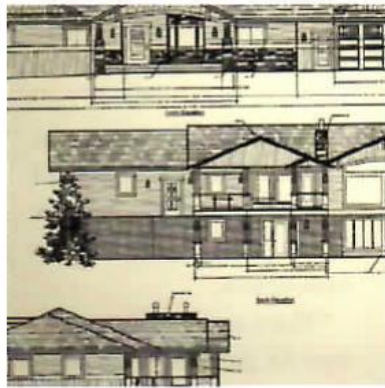
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The spring sunshine we joyfully welcome also shows how badly the windows need washing, and when that job is done, mounds of clutter acquired in our winter nests are revealed. We're inspired to get at the ritual of spring cleaning and de-cluttering.

We want to clean safely. No more poisoning the planet. No more tearing up our skin and lungs with nuclear-strength products when a gentle touch will do. We're taking a closer look at the cleaning products we use. Maybe we need big gun cleaners for the barbecue, but wall washing doesn't need a skull-and-crossbones treatment.

The three leading warriors in a responsible fight against grime are really pretty happy-face products: White vinegar, baking soda and lemon juice.

Vinegar is an all-purpose cleaner. Mix it half and half with water in a spray bottle and you are armed to tackle most cleaning jobs. Vinegar is natural, a great deodorizer, and some authorities claim it disinfects. Your grandmother probably rinsed



her hair with it before the days of conditioner. That's because it stripped away soap residue and left a fresh fragrance. "Vinegar is safe to use on most surfaces and has the added bonus of being incredibly cheap," says Sarah Aguirre of about.com.

Test the vinegar solution on an inconspicuous area to find out if the surface material and colour can stand up to it. Improperly diluted vinegar can erode tile grout. Never use vinegar on marble.

Here are suggestions for successful use:

- Vinegar makes windows sparkle.

- Vinegar wipes up spills on appliances and countertops.

- A cupful of vinegar poured into your mop bucket cleans floors without water streaks.

- Vinegar is a natural fabric softener. Add half a cup to the rinse cycle.

- Full-strength vinegar can clean toilet bowls, tackle soap scum or hard water stains.

- A tablespoon of vinegar simmered in a cup of water while cooking garlic, onions or cabbage will absorb most of the odor.

For a variety of jobs, bring on the lemon juice. This strong food acid belongs in a responsi-

ble cleaning arsenal, because it's effective against most household bacteria.

Lemon juice, mixed with a little vinegar and baking soda to make a paste, works for shining brass and copper. Polish fine hardwood furniture with a mixture of half a cup of lemon juice with one cup of olive oil. Send a whole strip of lemon peel through the garbage disposal to freshen the drain.

You may know the value of keeping an open box of baking soda in your refrigerator to absorb odors. Baking soda can also clean, soften water and scour. Use it to scrub surfaces that need grit.

Don't overlook the possibilities in the cornstarch package. It's about more than pudding. Cornstarch can be safely used to clean windows, polish furniture and shampoo carpets.

For really tough jobs, go for the trisodium phosphate, commonly known as TSP. It's a mixture of soda ash and phosphoric acid. No, you don't want to swallow it because it is toxic. But it's safer than more-toxic chemicals that are usually sold to clean drains or remove old paint, according to www.eartheasy.com. It also doesn't produce fumes.

These simple products help you get the sparkle without the guilt.

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Make a Clean Sweep

Now we're ready to de-clutter, ready to be a little ruthless, because we realize how much easier cleaning routines will be if we simply have less stuff.

Don't trash the untrash-ables. You probably already know where most of it should go. Saskatoon Curbside Recycling takes care of tonnes in their three-bin system. Bin one is for all paper and cardboard except newsprint. Bin two is for aluminum, tin, glass, plastics and plastic bags, and bin three holds two large plastic bags, one for newsprint and one for beverage containers of all kinds. You don't need to spend your precious weekend carting stuff to depots.

"Recycling with us allows for our city to car pool its recyclable materials to various drop off sites, reducing the impact on the environment while freeing up your valuable weekend time," said a spokesperson at Saska-

toon Curbside Recycling.

The City of Saskatoon holds household hazardous waste collection dates, announced in local media. This is how to get rid of household, automotive, lawn and garden chemicals that you don't want.

Often a householder's biggest puzzle is a dead piece of electronic equipment. SWEEP (Saskatchewan Waste Electronic Equipment Program), contracts with SARCAN Recycling to accept obsolete electronics, (depot locations at www.sweepit.ca or call 1-888-350-6555.)

SWEEP takes desktop computers and peripherals, notebook computers, monitors, desktop printers, all-in-one devices and televisions. If your equipment still has life in it, consider donating or selling it.

For recycling paint, see www.productcare.org. For general recycling information see www.saskwastereduction.ca.



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THE ROOM



The One-Day Bathroom Renovation

It's Also Efficient and Economical

Bathroom renovation – or any renovation for that matter – makes people more money-conscious than ever in uncertain economic times. Bath Fitter, a North-America wide company located in Saskatoon and Regina, offers one of the more affordable quality options with its signature one-day bathroom remodelling.

Traditional remodelling – a full tear-out and replacement with tile work and new fixtures – can cost \$10,000 or more, and can put a bathroom out of commission for days, if not weeks. A Bath Fitter one-day remodel costs much less than that, and the quality and care are still there.



Free In-home Estimate

The first part of the process is the free in-home estimate. Bath Fitter uses trained estimators who can answer all of a client's questions about tub liners, showers, and the company's unique seamless wall systems. They are also trained to accurately take the measurements of the customer's bath area – infor-

mation they'll use in two ways. First, they'll assess whether the Bath Fitter experience will work in the customer's home, and second, they'll be able to determine the products that will best meet their needs. Estimators can also help by guiding the customer through the numerous choices of color in tub liners, showers, and accessories.

A Bath Fitter bathroom makeover is economical and efficient. Photos: Bath Fitter

Custom Manufacturing

Next, Bath Fitter custom manufactures the products that are going to be installed. The estimators provide the exact measurements of the customer's bathroom fixtures to the manufacturing plant in Montreal. There, employees use these



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measurements to create a tub liner, shower base, or wall-system that meets the exact specifications of the customer's home.

Because they practice an efficient form of management known as vertical integration, Bath Fitter controls every step of the process. For example, to make sure the acrylic used is of the highest possible quality, the company manufactures its own durable, attractive acrylic right on site. This acrylic is then thermoformed into the exact products required.

Vertical integration doesn't end there. Bath Fitter even deploys its own trucks to guarantee secure and on-time delivery.

One-day Installation

The next part of the Bath Fitter experience is the company's advantage of getting the job done in one-day. When the installer arrives at the customer's home, he will already have the estimator's exact measurements of the bathroom as well as the custom-moulded fixtures that fit right over the old ones. This takes any element of surprise out of the process.

Installations vary according to the exact demands of the customer. One of the most common is a tub liner and wall system installation. A trained technician will prepare the surface of the old tub by laying down high quality, non-toxic adhesives. Old plumbing fixtures, such as faucets and shower-heads, can also be replaced with energy-efficient models that reduce water use.

When it's time to move the new tub liner into place, the fit is exact. The tub liner bonds quickly and seamlessly with the old tub, so that when the work is finished, it's pretty much impossible to tell that the old tub was ever there.

The Bath Fitter experience is unique every step of the way, and it's been a hit among customers in Saskatchewan for many years. Perhaps it's time to find out about the Bath Fitter experience for your home.

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Saskatoon HOME Spring 2009

THE Urge to Renovate Reclaimed Spaces

A photograph of a modern kitchen and bar area. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams. The bar has a curved, light-colored wooden countertop and a matching wooden base. Several bar stools with brown leather seats and chrome bases are positioned around the bar. In the background, there are shelves with various glassware and a kitchen area with orange cabinets and a stainless steel refrigerator. The overall aesthetic is warm and contemporary.

Revitalized homes, revitalized
neighbourhoods, revitalized citizenry.

Celebrating a Remarkable Sense of Place

THERE'S ONE THING I NOTICE WHEN I TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR HOMES: A SENSE OF PLACE. I HAVE NOTICED THIS FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE LIVED IN SASKATCHEWAN, DURING TIMES WHEN HOUSING PRICES WERE DEPRESSED AND DURING BOOM TIMES WHEN VALUES HAVE SKYROCKETED.

When I was living in other cities, in other provinces, I did not see this. People's homes were transitory. Everyone always seemed so anxious to move on or move up. A house was not a place to live in; it was an investment, as impersonal as any business transaction with a faceless multinational corporation. More than that, it was an investment to be flipped early and often.

Don't get me wrong. There are good reasons to move. Families grow or shrink. Jobs come and go. Disasters, public or personal, befall unexpectedly. I once moved eight times in eight years.

I never understood what people meant when they talked about putting down roots, until I experienced it in Saskatoon. Before then, this was merely a quaint expression I first heard from my grade three teacher. But those who have actually put down roots understand the sense of place, the gradual or sometimes not-so-gradual realization that you belong somewhere.

I almost expected to see that sense of place evaporate as Saskatoon house prices began taking off in a big way two years ago. We haven't been able to turn on the TV without hearing about the housing prices or

Previous page:
The kitchen of The
Hayloft. Photo:
Jimmy Oneschuk

open a newspaper without reading about residential construction. Whether prices and construction are rising, steady or falling, it's all news and it ought to make people think about the places they live, in ways that they had not thought about them before.

Yet, even now, everyone I meet still considers their house their home. Nonetheless, the recent boom has changed people's attitudes in ways that fundamentally alter how they value both their private spaces and our communal spaces.

Homeowners are more willing than ever to invest in renovation projects that reflect the value of their properties. When house prices were depressed, it was hard to justify any expense that exceeded the value of the building. Even as house prices decline, they are still higher than at the start of the boom, so that renovation investments continue to pay off, especially if those investments have involved energy efficiency measures.

I watched as what seems like a third of the houses in our immediate neighbourhood upgraded siding, insulation, windows and doors last summer and fall. Judging by the activity in the area, it's a good bet that changes were taking place within the homes, as well. The city's building permits reports would suggest that this is happening all over Saskatoon.

What I found most remarkable about this transformation was that

many of the upgrades were taking place on wartime houses. Elsewhere in the country, these buildings would have been deemed too old, too small and much too plain to be worth the effort of saving them, let alone to improve them. Their owners would have brought in the bulldozers and started over or called up a real estate agent and moved on without a second thought. But to Saskatonians, our homes have value beyond their dollars. It didn't hurt that our currently higher property values made the upgrades a wise investment decision. Yet, the decisions that the owners made to renovate, instead of tear down or move, reflect the sense to which their personal space defines their identities.

At a grander scale, we are seeing a revitalization of entire neighbourhoods. A new generation of developer has begun eyeing up properties that others would not see of any value. Audacious buyers are helping older homes in slighted neighbourhoods gain renewed life. New forms of in-fill residential development are bringing a creative rebirth to core neighbourhoods and to downtown. The distinctions between residential space and commercial space are becoming blurred, and even reversed. The conversion of formerly commercial or institutional spaces into residential and the evolution of live/work spaces would not be occurring except for our sense of "place."

■ DARRELL NOAKES



Above: Snow covers the grounds of the Petit/Sommerville house as it is today. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk



Left: The brightly lit bathroom is accented by the original clawfoot tub, which was discovered with help from the 1927 renovation blueprints. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk

Opposite: The Petit/Sommerville house circa 1912. Photo: Archives, scanned/processed by Tasha Fraser

A Regal Residence Restored To Its Former Gracious Glory



GRAND REDESIGN

The Petit/Sommerville house is a stately manor that has been standing on University Drive in Saskatoon since 1912. Over the last hundred years, this cornerstone of the neighbourhood has been a family home, rental quarters, and was even allegedly a brothel at one time. However, this regal domicile had been flirting with demolition until the husband and wife team of Karen and Steve Anonymous decided to dedicate years of their lives to returning this residence to its former glory.



Above: The sundeck above the portico was heavily damaged; much of the interior was in the same condition. The rotten wood on the deck (and in the home) was stripped down to the 2 x 4s. (Photos: scanned/processed by Tasha Fraser)

Below: The kitchen features an oak floor and cabinetry by Redl Kitchens. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk



"It's one of those houses that a lot of people go by and they remember," says Karen. "We also used to walk by, for decades, and sort of dream about it. When it came on the market, we were ready for it. We bought it with the sole idea of turning it back into the one family house that it was."

Laden with windows and accented with square turrets and a long driveway leading underneath the arches of a portico, the house was deserted by 1915 when the real estate market bottomed out during the war. The original owner, Herman Petit, had wanted a unique look, so he had hired Frank P. Martin. An architect and engineer, Martin was known for creating some of the city's major architectural construction during Saskatoon's early boom years, including the Macmillan Building and Pleasant Hill School.

"The design of the house was a combination of everything Petit thought was cool," says Karen. "The style has sometimes been called Queen Anne revival, which I think just means eclectic."

Restoring this unique dwelling to its gracious former self proved to be a task of gargantuan proportions. Karen and Steve had renovated several houses previously, even

winning a Heritage Award from the city for their last endeavor, a residence on Saskatchewan Crescent. However, this house would prove to be more complex than any of the houses they had restored in the past.

"We learned how to renovate by having] some good friends with knowledge, lots of reading, and lots of risk," explains Steve. "But there were parts of this house where we weren't sure what was there. When you're undoing 80 years of renovations, sometimes there's a lot of adapting to what you find underneath."

The most complicated aspect of the adaptation was to undo the substantial modifications that took place in 1927. The 4,200 square foot home had been divided up into five separate rental units, which changed the building drastically. The main staircase that had gone from the basement to the third floor had been removed, and an outside stairway had been added to service the rental units on the third floor. In fact, for the first two years the couple owned the home, they were forced to go outside in order to move between floors. More so than in most heritage home restorations, their work was part restoration and part renovation.

"The renovation in '27 was massive," says Steve. "They did things that were impossible to change back. Some of those things are beyond restoration."

Armed with blueprints from 1927, the couple set out to use every resource at their disposal to restore the house. Rarely taking any time off, they planned the jobs in sequence, living in numerous sections of the house as they worked. Much of the residence had become decrepit, and they had to tear down before they could rebuild.

After a lengthy deconstruction of the innards of the building, they enlisted the assistance of an electrician and a plumber, with the wiring in particular causing them grief. The original walls were plaster over concrete

with a brick exterior, so in order to install insulation and run wiring, they had to erect additional walls with framing overtop of the originals. When that chore was complete, the couple spent weeks crawling through cramped, filthy spaces to run the new wiring, including turning five electrical boxes from the rental units back to one main box.

When the warmer months were upon them, they were free to work on the exterior. The yard was landscaped, windows were installed, and the gazebo and carriage house were repaired. The most beautiful aspect of the exterior is a portico above the main entrance, which houses a sundeck, accessible from the second floor. It was wet and rotted out, so Steve stripped it down to the 2 x 4s and rebuilt it. Now, it's a scenic hideaway, perfect for enjoying a weekend coffee and paper, while overlooking the majesty of University Drive.

"You're kind of up in the trees," says Steve, "and most people don't even know there's a deck up there. It's really cool in the summer."

During the winter months, the couple retreated to labour inside the home. Steve is a masterful carpenter, and reconstructed everything from grand staircases to the minor accents, like moldings and banisters. Karen painted and stained more in a few years than most will in a lifetime, and in fact, even sewed all the curtains herself. Their passion translated to patience as they slowly uncovered the old home.

"We do love old houses, and we love working," admits Karen. "It's really exciting to find the house buried beneath what usually is a bunch of renovations."

One of the largest indoor tasks proved to be reimagining the kitchen, which took an entire year. The floor was leveled and a real oak floor was installed so it could be refinishable in as many as a hundred years. This also meant mounting marble underneath the steam radiator to halt its heat and weight

from working its way into the floor over time. The marble, though functional, is also a lovely visual touch.

Anyone who enjoys the culinary arts would fall in love with this kitchen. The walls are lined with outstanding white cabinetry, built by Redl Kitchens, and there is a charming little baking corner off the main area. This corner almost didn't come to fruition because of an arched doorway leading to the front room that did not leave enough space. In the end, they moved the doorway over 16 inches, a process Steve will not be quick to repeat.

"It's a lot of work to move a door 16 little inches," he laughs.

Work on the house is not quite complete, but the couple can see an end on the horizon. Though it was impossible to restore it to its original state, Karen and Steve have built on the past to fashion something innovative and elegant. Where once they were the people passing the house, it is now their neighbors who stroll by, always with encouraging words, thrilled that the picturesque home has been resurrected. The couple has not simply renovated one building; they have revitalized a small but significant part of Saskatoon.



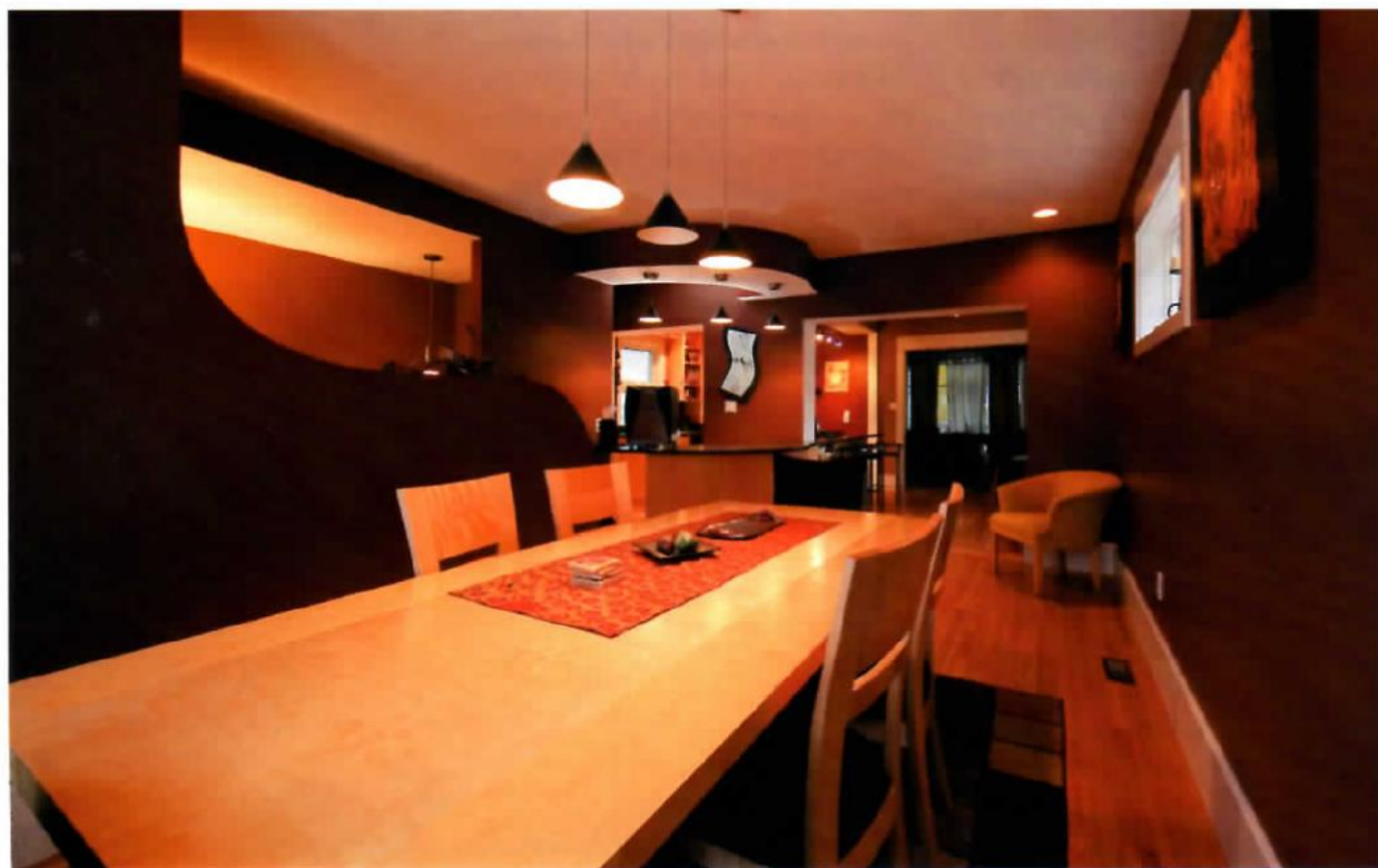
"The house was almost demolished once about 25 years ago because it was hard to salvage," says Karen. "But now it's a very strong feature of the neighborhood; one of the anchors of a beautiful neighborhood."

■ CRAIG SILLIPHANT

Above: The front entrance. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk

Below: Just a small section of the workspace available in the renovated kitchen. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk





Couples Rejuvenate Their Home To Reflect Their Personalities

A TALE OF TWO RENOS

R

enovations are personal affairs. They are property owners' means to personalize their homes, to claim ownership of the most intimate spaces around them. Short of building an entirely new home, renovations reinterpret the spaces designed by those who occupied them before so that they belong to the new occupants.

The two Saskatoon families featured here show how they understand the powerful influences that our living spaces exert on our sense of comfort and personal well being. No sooner had they moved in than they began adapting those spaces.

It can be no coincidence that both families make their livings creating meaningful personal experiences for others.

Odette Nicholson is a professional visual artist. She and her husband, Mark, who has his own artistic flair, own Gaby's children's clothing store on Broadway.

Opposite top: The slit at the top of the wall separating the living room from the master bedroom allows light and air to flow through the house. The colours "mingle and play in the light," says owner Odette Nicholson. The renovated kitchen is more open and efficient.

Opposite bottom: The addition built three years ago by Sarah Robbins and Jeff Hehn expanded their dining room and allowed the kitchen to expand with a curved espresso bar.



Top: The slit at the top of the wall separating the living room from the master bedroom allows light and air to flow through the house.

Bottom: Marble tiles absorb light spilling in from the skylight above, producing a subtle lighting throughout the bathroom. The colours and decor make the room feel more spacious.

Sarah Robbins and her partner, Jeff Hehn, a lecturer at SIAST, own Caffè Sola coffee house in the Warehouse District.

Although both families felt inspired to change their relationships with their homes as soon as they could begin, each applied their own unique approaches to achieve their goals.

For the Nicholsons, it was largely a project they wanted to complete on their own, hiring tradespeople only where their own expertise fell short. Robbins and Hehn brought in the big guns, commissioning an architect to design the project and a builder to execute it.

Both approaches were highly successful, delivering to each homeowner the finished home they desired.

The Nicholsons: Big Boost for a Bungalow

When Mark and Odette Nicholson renovated their Haultain house, it wasn't the first time they'd taken on such a project. They

have a knack for taking any place they've lived and adapting it to their needs.

The 1955 bungalow they found on the market three years ago was as solid as a rock. It proved to be the perfect location for Odette, a local visual artist, to work her magic.

During the following two years, they went about their work. The kitchen got a new counter top, while the cabinets beneath were updated with pullout racks. Overhead, the cupboard doors were removed. The Nicholsons removed inefficient counter and cabinet space on one side of the kitchen to make way for a new stove and lighter cabinets, putting a new refrigerator in the location formerly occupied by the stove. They added a high volume range hood, vented through the roof. The changes opened up the kitchen, making it a more efficient place to work.

The bathroom was updated with a pedestal style sink, low-flow toilet, new mirror, designer lighting and marble tiled floor.

The couple tore up the original linoleum

from the kitchen floor and put down commercial vinyl tiles. They pulled up the carpeting throughout the main floor, then sanded and finished the hardwood floors they found underneath.

"It was all indoor-outdoor carpet, all the way through the bedroom, the hallway, everything," says Odette.

"We did the floor, then we did the wall," says Mark. "We put the wall back in and put the door on."

Previous owners had knocked out a wall that once separated the master bedroom from the living room. It created a huge living space, but didn't do much to help sleeping space in the two-bedroom home. Putting back the wall would reinstate the master bedroom and create a cozy, more comfortable living room. Still, with the house oriented across the width of the lot and the living room facing north, it would be a challenge to make the most of natural sunlight once the wall was up.

"There was no point building the wall all the way up to the ceiling, because you're never really away from anybody who might be in the living room or the kitchen," says Odette. "And I wanted light — and air — to flow through between the rooms so that the rooms never get stuffy. I can have the [bedroom] door closed for visual privacy and, in the middle of the afternoon, the air and the sunlight coming from the south are coming into the living room through the envelope at the top. You can see the colour of the wall on the other side, the different colour of the wall on this side, and they mingle and play in the light."

"I like the feeling of the air moving. I like the house to feel fresh by itself. You always have the smell of fresh air. It's comfortable sitting in here, not stagnant."

In the basement, they exposed the walls down to the concrete, added insulation and vapour barrier, and installed a high efficiency



furnace and water heater. On the basement floor, they applied a mix of ceramic tile, cork flooring and linoleum tile.

"A lot of the decorating happens because I find material and then we do the room," says Odette, "as opposed to deciding to do the room and spending more money being frustrated at not being able to find exactly what I want and taking a substitute."

"I kept experimenting with different tiles. I kept bringing the samples home and realized that the skylight (in the bathroom) being so huge, the light in the middle of the day just reflected up. You practically had to wear sunglasses in the bathroom. The surface of tile is blinding, but the marble is very subtle because it's natural stone. It absorbs a lot of (the light). It happened to be on sale, so I bought it and brought it home."

The artists says her desire for the aesthetic appearance of the house is tempered greatly by its purpose. "If I want to liquidate the home or sell the house, it has to be acceptable to a good number of people. So, right there, I shut myself down, but I have my art studio. I have my outlet through my art. If I want to do interesting things — interesting to me — then I do it in my studio. I don't try to do it in the home."

"So, in our house, it's the light and the air



Living room transformed. The refinished floors let the natural beauty of the wood bring a sense of warmth into the room. Odette Nicholson's artistic eye finds colours that relate well together, helping her create comfortable spaces.



and the comfort of people," she explains. "For example, not having the doors on the kitchen cupboards, because the people that I live with are visual. They have to be able to see things to know where they are. It's faster. In commercial kitchens, there are no doors on anything. Everything's open for ease of use and quickness. It's very efficient. But some people would look at that and see chaos and they don't like to be able to see what the contents are inside the cupboards. So, I saved the doors. I'll put them back on if we ever list the house.

"I think about how to use what I already have, how to improve it so that it's more efficient and more beautiful, but we don't have to spend a billion dollars on it."

Odette is finding herself in demand to put her artistic talents to work designing other people's spaces.

Commissions come by word of mouth, says Mark.

"People come to me," says Odette. "I don't want to railroad them into doing something they don't want to do, but I have the ability to be perceptive about how it's going to work out best for the client, regardless of what I think it could be if it was just me that got to decide. I'm very aware of how the space is going to work for the people who

are going to be using the space."

"It started after we did the church conversion," she says, referring to a former Methodist church at the corner of Main Street and Eastlake Avenue that the Nicholsons had lived in for three years. The space was perfect for an artist.

"When we had the church, we had lots of fund raisers, charity parties, where we'd get a couple hundred people in there," says Odette.

Odette, who has also worked as a musician in the past, is currently helping the Saskatoon Jazz Society build the new Jazz Bassment in the former post office building downtown.

Robbins and Hehn: Rental House Gets Revamped to Roomy

When Sarah Robbins and Jeff Hehn moved into their 1914 two-storey Varsity View house 12 years ago, the first thing they did was begin making a few changes.

"When we bought the house, it was a rental house," says Robbins. "It was in pretty rough shape. The day we got keys, we actually had a wall bashing party and started the renovations right away."

Those renovations updated the kitchen, floors and upstairs.

Three years ago, the couple decided to renovate again.

"This house actually had a really good sense of use of space, as an old house," says Robbins. "There are no hallways. Basically it was just rooms. Even though it was 800 square feet of house, there was a lot of space in it."

"We realized the house was too small," says Robbins. "We wanted a bigger dining room and space to put our bikes and stuff, and we wanted a dedicated workout room."

"Jeff thought about moving, but I love this area and didn't want to move out of it. We looked at a few more houses and looked at house prices, and just thought it would be better to put an addition on, as opposed to buying something new, because then you still have to fix it the way you like it."

They commissioned Saskatoon architect Heney Klypak, of Klypak Rusick Architects, to design their addition. Simon Toon and his company First General Services handled the construction. Robert Assié from Tesella Stone Carvers did the work on the slate counter tops used in the kitchen and slate flooring elsewhere in the house.

Robbins and Hehn own Caffè Sola downtown. For Robbins it's a full time calling that she took up after a career as a veterinarian, while Hehn works as a lecturer at SIAST. Both of them are dedicated cyclists, competing in cyclo-cross and triathlon.

The new renovations had to accommodate their life style and interests. The addition would nearly double the space available to the couple, improving the basement, expanding the main floor and creating a new master bedroom with ensuite bathroom, ensuite walk-in closet and an upstairs laundry. The old master bedroom, a tiny space, is now their office. The basement incorporates a workout room. The addition also



made it possible to move the basement stairs from the kitchen to the back of the house, providing better access from outside. The stairwell was removed and the space converted into a pantry.

A summer kitchen at the back of the house and an attached garage, had to be torn down to make way for the addition.

The space formerly occupied by the summer kitchen allowed for expansion of the kitchen into a curved espresso bar, a perfect complement for the owners of a European-styled coffee house.

Upstairs, the new master bedroom is "completely opposite to downstairs," says Robbins. "Downstairs is all curves and soft angles. Up here it's all hard angles. Originally we were going to put a flat ceiling, but I always thought it was kind of neat to have a cathedral ceiling. I did want the bedroom to be really loft like and airy. I wanted the sense

of airiness upstairs and I wanted a sense of contemporary-ness downstairs."

True to Klypak's talent for such renovations, from the outside the addition is indistinguishable from the original structure.

"It replicates the front of the house, with the dormer," says Robbins. "If you look at it from the side of the house, you can't tell there's a difference in the addition, because the house is so balanced."

They've now changed every square inch of the house, muses Robbins.

"It's totally our house now!"

■ DARRELL NOAKES

Above and opposite: The addition, built three years ago, gave the couple a larger dining area and curved espresso bar. Upstairs, it added a new master bedroom with ensuite bath, walk-in closet and laundry. The basement contains a workout room. Architect Heney Klypak's use of curves creates a graceful space.



Above: With the addition, a new stairway leading to the rear entrance and basement meant that the old stairway leading down from the kitchen could be removed, making room for a pantry. Curved lines feature prominently in the addition, including the custom made hand rail.



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STYLE

PrairieMod
A Beautiful Home
Means
A Beautiful Life

PrairieMod is a recently coined term to describe a 21st century lifestyle based on the idea that living in a well-balanced home created with beauty and meaning is the foundation of a similar existence. It is an amalgamation of the two design movement terms Prairie School and Modernism from the late 19th century. The philosophies of these two eras had a major impact on North American living. They in turn sprang from the Arts and Crafts Movement whose proponents believed that a beautiful home leads to a beautiful life.

One of the primary gurus of PrairieMod followers is, of course, architect Frank Lloyd Wright who became the Prairie School's most important innovator and whose career progressed into Modernism. Additionally, he was a major influence on other Modern architects like Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Rudolf Schindler, Richard Neutra and John Lautner. Other designers and architects revered by PrairieMod fans are Gustav Stickley, Richard Neutra, Charles and Ray Eames and E. Faye Jones.



A website, prairiemod.com, has been set up by PrairieMod followers to promote this principle-based lifestyle. It features articles which include interviews with architects and designers, blogs and podcasts, and an online store that carries pottery, art screens, ornaments; prints, books and other objects and materials influenced by these design schools.

The website's creators defined ten principles of the PrairieMod lifestyle gleaned from the philosophies of the designers and architects they admire.

"One thing we recognize is that each of us is at a different place in life," they write. "Many

of us live in condos or apartments. Some have recently moved into older homes that need renovation or some good old T.L.C. Still, others are beginning the process of building new homes. Whatever the case may be, these principles can help inform the decisions we make while creating our homes."

Proponents of PrairieMod say a home should be a reflection of its inhabitants and grows from their values, rather than something imposed by outside forces. A home should be a physical representation of the ten principles and is not just a place to live, but a way of life.

Frank Lloyd Wright once

said, "People who have never seen or never lived in a beautiful environment ... can never know what they have missed." PrairieMod followers believe that by exploring and applying the ten principles, people can experience an enriched and inspiring life through the rewarding creation of a beautiful, meaningful home.

The ten principles are challenging and may require a change in perspective, a possible downsizing or an altering of habits. The incorporation of just one principle, however, can make a profound impact.

View: www.prairiemod.com

■ DONA STURMANIS



10 Principles of the PrairieMod Lifestyle

Previous page and opposite: Ornamental screens and art glass add an elegant PrairieMod touch to a home. These screens and other aesthetically pleasing objects are available at prairiemo.com.
Photo: prairiemo.com

Above: A thoughtfully placed grouping of interesting vases can be a focal point in an uncluttered room.
Photo: prairiemo.com

1. Consider the Cost

We make decisions everyday concerning everything from what clothes to wear to what kind of car to buy. These decisions usually involve a wide variety of products and services to choose from. Choice is a wonderful aspect of living in our society, but it's easy to fall victim to making a decision based on our emotions, a sales pitch, or even the stress of having too many choices! This can be especially true when making the important decision on where and how to live.

This is why the first principle of living the PrairieMod Lifestyle is Consider the Cost. This doesn't just refer to the amount of money it will take to pay for our home, even though that is a significant part of making this decision. Instead, we mean the "big picture" costs associated with our home. Considering the cost helps to push our thinking from the realm of "instant gratification" to the realm of "long-term satisfaction."

2. Form is Function

The principle of Form is Function states that the form of our home should reflect the function of it as well. If we consider the form only, we may end up with an interesting looking house that can't perform the function of being liveable. If we focus only on functionalism and ignore the form, we end up with a house that performs its basic sheltering duty, but appears sterile or downright ugly. Either way, we end up with a place that excels only at being inadequate. The form of each item, each room, and of course the overall house, should be designed and considered in a direct relationship with its function.

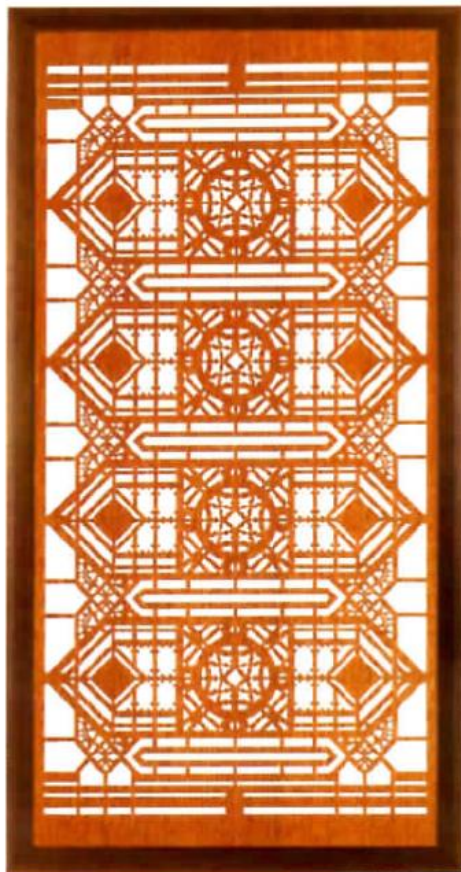
3. Less Becomes More

The Principle of Less Becomes More is meant to remind us that we are supposed to live in our homes and not our "things." A beautiful home is made so through the thoughtful and integrated placement of beautiful and useful objects. A simple plant, a gorgeous vase, a well-designed lamp — these things thoughtfully placed in an uncluttered environment can be admired for their individual beauty, instead of being lost in a sea of stuff. Those individual items act like the punctuation marks in the grammar of our home. Our eyes will be able to rest on a select few, pleasing, meaningful objects integrated into the overall scheme of our home. Less Becomes More, so that we can own our things — instead of our things owning us.

4. Useful and Beautiful

The Principle of Useful and Beautiful can be a tricky one to master. Determining the "useful" aspect of something is usually not that difficult. If you use something on a regular basis and it serves that function well—odds are it's useful. Beauty, on the other hand, is a little more difficult to pin down.

It is simplicity that helps to define what should be classified as beautiful in the



PrairieMod Lifestyle. This shouldn't be taken to mean "plain" or "boring," but instead look for things that embody excellent design and craftsmanship, are imbued with integrity and honesty of material and craft and most importantly will naturally fit into the overall unity of our home's appearance. Remember, having useful and beautiful objects in our everyday environments will help reflect beauty in our thoughts, behaviour, and ultimately in our lives.

5. Informal Meets Elegant

We are indebted to the Prairie School innovators for adapting the Japanese quality of "open space" to our modern way of life. By eliminating all the extra walls and rooms found in the Victorian houses, the Prairie homes gave us some breathing room to live in and introduced us to a more casual existence. But the true genius of the Prairie School of design didn't just lie in opening

up a home's floor-plan, it was also in simplifying furnishings and décor in a sophisticated, unified way; showing us the Principle of Informal Meets Elegant.

As the principle of "Useful and Beautiful" relies on the notion of simplicity at its core, so does "Informal Meets Elegant." Building and decorating informally means not having to worry about frills, superfluous extras, and compartmentalizing our living spaces. To do it with elegance means to apply a unified structure to the whole and pay heed to the other principles in doing so. This is what separates a warm, inviting, natural home from a cold, sterile home or a horribly cluttered and stifling home.

6. Integrate and Unify

Unity is one of the most important aspects of creating a beautiful home for living a beautiful life. When we apply integration and unity to our surroundings, it puts us in har-

mony with our environment and has enormous affects on how we feel and the quality of our lives.

To follow this principle, we must be aware of how our home fits us and how we fit our home. We must be aware of how the things we select to put in our homes might fit into the overall fabric of the environment we're creating. If our house is designed in a way that does not fit our real needs, we will ultimately experience the dis-unity and dis-integration of our lives. If our house is filled with disjointed and disconnected items that have no relation to the environment as a whole, we will feel just as out-of-place. As the practitioners of the Arts and Crafts movement believed, a unified home is a beautiful home. Such a home, along with its principled selection of décor, would therefore be the source of moral and spiritual growth for the people within.



Benjamin Moore and Tamco Homes are excited to bring you the 2009 Ronald McDonald House HOME Lottery. This lottery features a gorgeous, fully furnished custom built showhome, built by Tamco Homes in the Lakeridge subdivision in Regina, plus an Early Bird prize for a 2009 Cadillac CTS, along with 4 great travel prizes, a Victory motorcycle, and a custom home deck package.

Benjamin Moore has been a long time supporter of Ronald McDonald House by donating all paint and supplies for all Ronald McDonald Houses throughout North America including Saskatchewan's Ronald McDonald House, located right here in Saskatoon. Saskatchewan Ronald McDonald House supports all corners of our province by providing a 'home away from home' for families of sick children who are receiving specialized care in Saskatoon. For 10 years, Ronald McDonald House in Saskatoon has been operating at full capacity, and sadly - is forced to turn families away. We wish to change that. With Benjamin Moore now partnering with the independent home builder - Tamco Homes - this lottery home and related prize packages have been supplied for this urgent cause. You now have a very unique opportunity to support Saskatchewan's Ronald McDonald House by purchasing a lottery ticket, with all net proceeds going towards Saskatchewan expansion of Ronald McDonald House.

Ronald McDonald House. Giving sick kids what they need most.....their families.

Ticket prices are \$100 each, or 3 for \$250. Tickets can be purchased by calling TollFree: 1-888-740-2040, or Saskatoon local: 668-8149. Tickets will also be sold at the Saskatoon Homestyles Home Show (March 19-22, 2009), and at the Regina Spring Home and Garden Show (March 26-29). Please visit the Benjamin Moore booth at either show to purchase your tickets or to receive more lottery information.

Tickets will also be available at the lottery showhome itself - located at 4518 Cudmore Crescent in Regina. Lottery Home hours are Mon - Thurs 7-9pm, and Weekends 1-5pm. Ticket information packages are available at all Benjamin Moore retailers in Saskatchewan, along with the following partners:

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7. Bring The Outside In

In our fast-paced, technology-driven modern world, we have become increasingly disconnected from nature. We've come to see nature as something that is outside of us. We think we must travel to see and appreciate it or overcome and bend it to our human will. But this is not true. We are part of nature, whether we realize it or not. It is all around and we act on nature as much as nature acts on us. Acknowledging our integrated existence with the natural world is the first step in developing a natural home.

Frank Lloyd Wright called this way of living "organic" because of its close association with the unity and integration found in the natural world we inhabit. He felt a home should "spring from the ground and into the light." An effective way to do this is to follow the principle of Bring The Outside In.

8. Think Natural

To "Think Natural" means to look at the very nature of the materials we use to build and decorate our homes with. Wood should be treated like wood, so that its natural qualities are there for anyone to appreciate. Brick should look like brick, and glass should be used in the nature it is most effective and appropriate. When someone paints over wood or brick, it no longer has the essential qualities that made it "wood" or "brick" to begin with. When someone ignores the natural qualities of glass and uses it where wood or brick should have been used, the effects can be a disaster.

Thinking natural also means looking to nature for ideas and inspiration. The rich, inviting color palettes found in the spring meadows or the woods in autumn can be integrated in everything from fabric choices for linens and upholstery to wall and table setting colors. Natural finishes and textures should also be considered. Always looking to integrate and unify every part with the whole. To "Think Natural" is to ultimately

live natural with beauty, warmth and harmony.

9. Go Green

The ultimate step in thinking naturally is to consider how every one of our lifestyle choices affects our planet. We live in a time when the pressures of energy consumption are only going to become more pronounced and extreme. With our society held captive by the rising costs of fossil fuels, it is only a matter of time when our current lifestyle choices may no longer be feasible. In an effort to move a new direction, we can begin to focus on sustainability in what we build, what we buy and how we think.

The principle of Go Green should quite possibly be at the center of every decision we make. But, it's a hard one to put into practice. Many of us may find it difficult to consider sustainable products, or give up the perceived benefits of a larger house or car. This is an understandable reaction to the thought process associated with short-term benefits versus long-term benefits. However, it's making an investment in our future and something that we'll all have to come to grips with eventually.

10. Uniquely You

One of the greatest strengths of this lifestyle is its acknowledgment that everyone is uniquely individual. Each person will find a unique way to interpret and apply the 10 Principles when they examine their core values and beliefs—not based on fads, not based on what the media or advertising sells us, and not based on what our neighbours or friends are doing. It is the right of every person to be able to experience a home that uplifts their spirit and makes their life more meaningful and beautiful for having lived in it. We can find what is unique about each of us and then discover ways to express those characteristics in our individual homes.

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- 6. 5 star, 2 wk all inclusive vacation getaway for 2 to Dominican Republic: \$7,000.00
- 7. 5 star, 2 wk all inclusive vacation getaway for 2 to Cuba: \$7,000.00
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TIPSHEET

Efficient Spring Landscaping 101

Save Earth Energy and Your Energy

Instead of the mini-Eden we had envisioned, often we look at our landscaping and see: a nine-yard strip of perennials choked with weeds. Bare spots where we expected colour splashes. Heather languishing in the shade, sobbing for sun. Aphid-covered honeysuckle locked in a death rattle. A sprawl of annuals that demand immediate deadheading. Blight creeping up on roses. An irrigation head askew, blithely watering the driveway. And of course, almost audibly, the lawn demands to be mowed. Again.

Who has time to tend all this? How can you make your landscaping both beautiful and care-free? How can you make it responsible in water use and also lovely? How can you make it energy-efficient and time-efficient?

It starts with a plan. That plan doesn't need to be a drastic cactus-and-gravel makeover. But we can include swaths of xeriscaping that, once established, need scarcely any care and don't guzzle precious water.

Rather than bulldoze the yard and give up water cold turkey,



Hardy lilac is an excellent choice for a water-efficient garden. Photo: Dorothy Brotherton

we can plan hydro zones. In the garden's core, we may want an oasis, where water consumption will be highest. It could feature a circle of lawn, a winding stepping stone pathway, a shaded bench where we can sit among ferns, daisies, chrysanthemums and roses with begonias at our feet, beside a water feature. Colourful baskets of annuals can be placed strategically.

Circling out from this lush area can be a transitional zone, planted with choices that need

little more water than rainfall. This zone can backdrop your turfed bower with self-seeding hollyhock or hardy lilac. Consider ground covers that are well adapted to Saskatchewan's climate: Russian wild rye, creeping red fescue, wheat grass, buffalo grass, or mixtures. Lily-of-the-valley, Canada wild ginger, or creeping thyme provide ground cover that never needs mowing.

Circling farther out can be the driest zone, featuring native plants that adapt to our climate completely. Xeric plants are happy with Saskatchewan's 33 centimetres average annual rainfall. They may be indigenous, such as Saskatoon berry or buffalo berry, or they may have been introduced from a similar climatic zone, such as the lovely pale grey-green caryophyllus from Siberia.

In this outer, driest zone, hens-and-chicks could skip among a ground cover of sand-shaded pea gravel with proportion-interest added by granite boulders.

Tom Ward, a horticulturist at the University of Saskatchewan, reminds us that flowers only last a short time. "They are less important than foliage textures and colour, fruit that stays on the plant for several months and also feeds the birds, fall leaf colour that may last for two weeks, stem and bark colour that adds to the winter landscape."

Remember that Saskatoon is in Zone 2 of the gardener's division of the continent. That means only one zone is colder. So don't expect to grow coastal or subtropical plants.

To create your plan, take photos of your yard to your garden centre to get expert advice.

Sketch in the plants recommended in the correct hydro-zones. The idea is to group plants of similar water needs together—that's the key to hydro-zoned gardening. Don't locate a thirsty peony beside the desert dweller cactus. You'll never please them both. Cactus will suffer root rot from the water needed by peony. If you tip the scales in favour of the cactus, the peony will become a dry rag.

An alternative to circling zones is to create a dry riverbed zone running through your yard. This kind of feature gives the illusion that water once coursed along the path. It cuts down the lawn and the amount of watering needed. It contrasts with green lawn and adds interest.

In riverbed gardening, you build a stream bed that meanders through the yard, complete with river rock and gravel, sandy or curb banks and low-water plants. It can have a surprisingly pleasing visual effect, almost convincing you that water is actually bubbling along. It's a widespread practice in the Mediterranean area, Japan and China. Once installed, it's nearly maintenance-free. Xeriscaped sections of your landscaping give stronger visual ties to surrounding natural landscape, and give your home a sense of being at home in its context.

Your plan will turn out beautifully only if you've done your groundwork, literally. Prepare the soil, improve and amend it.

Advisers at University of Saskatchewan's extension division say that whether your soil is sand, silt or clay, it will benefit from adding organic matter—compost, manure, mulch or a commercial product. Organic matter helps retain water as well as feed plants. Healthy plants withstand drought. Soil amendments and correct fertilizing reduce work. Plants are healthier, and healthy plants resist diseases and bugs, so you don't need to spray.

During soil preparation is the time to install an underground sprinkling system. Ensure that you can control times and amounts of watering, and turn water off or on in specific zones as needed. Consider drip irrigation, popularized in the arid land of Israel. Remember wise watering principles: Deep watering develops deep roots. Water applied at night or early morning doesn't evaporate readily. Don't water pavement. Don't over-water.

The underground work includes laying poly or fabric under areas to be covered with rock, gravel or bark mulch.

Now the fun begins: Planting. As you plant, cover soil with mulch to reduce evaporation and keep soil cool. Mulching around plants in any zone helps keep weeds down and cut maintenance. Mulching is especially important around perennials that will be in the ground a long time, in danger of strangling by weeds. Established perennial borders can keep your work to a

minimum because they bloom year after year.

In Saskatchewan you want to use mulches that won't blow away in the wind, advises Sara Williams, a specialist in horticulture with the university's extension division. She suggests moistened peat moss, the coarser the better, grass clippings about four inches thick, well-rotted compost or manure, composted leaves, wood chips, commercial bark chips, hay and straw, evergreen needles and cones.

Consider container gardening to cut both work and water needs. Containers showcase the bright colours of annuals, such as petunias in sunny spots, begonias in shade. The plants fill the containers and give little room for weeds to get hold. When you water, you only water the plant and not a lot of extraneous surrounding ground. Containers are higher than ground level so you can tend plants without backbreaking bending. Ask at your garden centre for petunias that deadhead themselves and cut that chore.

Consider shade trees to keep sections of your yard cooler and use less water. Shade trees can cool your home too and reduce your consumption of air-conditioning energy.

Now you have time to sit back, relax and enjoy your garden, open your mail and learn that your water bill is pleasantly small.

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SHOWCASE

A New World Urban Barn

From an Old School Grocery Store

How a creative couple transformed a worn city building into a dynamic prairies-inspired live and work space.

When developer Curtis Olson and his wife, singer Carrie Catherine, set out to transform a former Caswell Hill grocery store into their residence, they combined playful elements with a desire to contribute to a sustainable community.

The result is an imaginative live/work space they call The Hayloft.

When the couple discovered the building in the fall of 2007, the once-thriving store had seen better days. Originally a Canada Safeway built in 1927, it had served as a Shop Rite grocery and a convenience store before ending up, neglected, as storage for old appliances. To complete the massive renovation, Olson needed to tear everything away.

"It was a total disaster," he says. "Basically, it wasn't good for anything beyond cold storage."

"The only things that remain, that were in the original build-



ing, are the structural elements and stucco on two sides. We demolished it right down to the exterior wall studs."

The renovation installed insulation, vapour barrier, new electrical systems, new mechanical systems, new heating, a poured concrete floor with in-floor heating and new windows.

The couple moved in on October 3, 2008, after eight months of construction. There are still minor touches to complete.

"I'm quite sure that I could have built this exact structure new from scratch in far less than what it took us to renovate it," says Olson, who previously

transformed the Fairbanks Morse Building into luxury lofts, while working alongside Peter Olson and Ian Stark of Olstar Developments Inc. "We were committed to living here and being here for quite a while, so we did the full scope of work for the renovation, added a garage out back, cut a new doorway in so we could come right into the basement from outside."

Their new home would have to meet certain criteria: more space than they had when they lived in the Fairbanks; a location that would allow them to express themselves creatively; a place to both live and work; and to support a sustainable life style.

Above: The kitchen in The Hayloft is modern, airy and inviting. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk

"Carrie and I both have home offices," says Olson. "Carrie is a singer and needs studio space. We do house concerts, so we have a constant flood of people coming through the house and it has to work for us both for living and working, and also workshop space."

Home had to be within walking distance of their favourite places, such as Caffè Sola, downtown and the river.

"In my world, a green and sustainable life style is highly dependent on living close to where you're working and the



Top: Playful prairie elements add a unique and nostalgic touch to the Hayloft. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk

Bottom: This bathroom in The Hayloft is modern and efficient. Photo: Jimmy Oneschuk

amenities and services that you need," says Olson.

"This is a very customized example of a live/work residence. We have a stage and this huge, open space which is specifically designed for having 60 people in here for a concert; this

just happens to be our 'work' side. This is our vision of what works for us, day to day, for all the different activities we're involved in."

That's where the playful element comes in, inspired by Graeme Patterson's whimsical Woodrow exhibit at the Mendel Art Gallery. Catherine was struck by the artists' miniature re-creation of a Saskatchewan town, with grain elevator, prairie town church.

"We liked the idea of honouring all of these prairie structures that are disappearing from our landscape," she says. "We both really identify as prairie kids, especially when we moved out to Victoria and lived in B.C. and realized our ties to the prairie and to Saskatchewan. It was a

great way to honour that and we love having a playful space."

Although scaled to fit into the house, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool elevator and gambrel roof barn are authentic. Olson meticulously researched construction techniques and historical styles. He even got a full set of architectural drawings for a grain elevator from Bernie Flaman, heritage architect for the Province of Saskatchewan.

"We decided on a New World barn because that's more predominant on the prairies," he says. "That structure is 100 per cent built out of salvaged barn board from three different farms around the province, from the barn board siding, to the trim, to the exposed trusses inside and the pine shakes on the roof. I think gives it a pretty honest soul."

The New World Dutch Barn is the vernacular for one built of heavy timber frames, three-bayed, with a door at the gable end.

The grain elevator uses end cuts that re-create the cribbing style of construction for old grain elevators, says Olson. "But it's actually a 2 by 4 framed wall. I couldn't justify using that much lumber for the walls, so it's just an end cut and the rest of the material went into a floor that I built in our bedroom."

The kitchen is built into a genuine Westeel Rosco grain bin. It's raised two steps above the floor to improve sight lines

during house concerts, as well as to define the space.

"The whole kitchen is meant to emulate the grain bin, wrapping all the way around right to the front," says Olson. "It turns out really well, too, because we have our pantry back here, which is where we do happen to store cereals and grains. Not only is it illustrative of a grain bin, we use it as one, as well!"

The renovation of a neighbourhood landmark attracted a lot of attention, says Catherine.

"There was a lot of curiosity about it," she says. "It built up a real sense of community, because people would come by and they would ask questions."

"It connected us to the people in the neighbourhood, and at the same time, it really inspired other people to think creatively about life style, about space, about sustainability and about all of the things that we were trying to build into this space."

"In other cities you see that a lot more, the transformation of a building from one use to another, from a warehouse into condos or from a house into a commercial space, and we always got really inspired by seeing that elsewhere because it usually meant development was happening in core neighbourhoods or downtown. You were re-using space that was no longer fulfilling its purpose and in, reinventing the space, you reinvented a whole new need and use for it, instead of just

popping new spaces on the outskirts of the city. That's a very big part of what Curt does as a developer, finding spaces that have outlived their current use and reinvent them."

"The space itself is a reminder to continue being playful and to be creative," she adds. "I think a big part of it is that the space itself keeps you laughing. You can't live and work in a barn and not have a good sense of humour about yourself."

Olson adds: "I think there's a lot of need for houses that better integrate living and working facilities, whether you're an artist and need studio space or whether you run a small design firm with one employee and need space to work out of."

Olson describes a change that has begun in Caswell Hill. Close by, there are four in-fill re-development projects taking place.

"All four of those properties are very modern, like something you'd see in Dwell magazine, and architecturally something completely different from everything in the neighbourhood, but exciting because they're very creative, very expressive houses," he says. "It all seems to be happening within a two block radius of here. I keep telling my friends that there's a modern uprising in Caswell Hill that's going on right now."

"I think it's a very vibrant and a very creative neighbourhood and a creative place to live."

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Saskatoon Transit is working on becoming a greener and more sustainable business. Every year, new technologies and equipment are added to make Saskatoon Transit a leader in sustainable practices. Saskatoon Transit's efforts are especially important as the City has committed to reducing its emissions 6% below 1990 levels by 2013 as part of its Energy and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan for Saskatoon.

One of the most public displays of this green movement within Transit is the addition of eight diesel electric-hybrid buses to the fleet over the past few years. These buses use hybrid technology to reduce fuel consumption, reduce emissions, and lower operating costs by allowing the engine to choose the most efficient power source during stopping, accelerating, and driving. Saskatoon Transit has also replaced several older units with new buses incorporating the latest emission reduction technology. Newer buses mean fewer emissions.

There has also been a substantial change in the back-

ground at Transit when it comes to becoming more sustainable. Since 2002, Saskatoon Transit has been involved in a canola bio-diesel study that tests the effectiveness of using bio-diesel in transit vehicles. Canola bio-diesel is a more environmentally-friendly fuel, and a renewable energy source that has been proven to increase fuel economy, reduce engine wear, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2007, Saskatoon Transit completed phases one and two of the bio-diesel study, and converted

the entire fleet to the use of a 1% bio-diesel mix based on the results. Phase three of the study is currently underway testing the effectiveness of a 5% bio-diesel mix, and if results continue to be favourable it could mean an increase of bio-diesel ratios within the next year meaning even greater reductions in emissions and cost savings.

Other green practices that have been adopted by Saskatoon Transit include reducing unnecessary idling of vehicles at stops, and the intro-

duction of the Smart Driver training program. The Smart Driver program is nationally recognized and designed to help operators improve their driving habits and help them to reduce stress while on the road. At the same time, these techniques and practices improve fuel and operating efficiencies. The program is a combination of hands on coaching as well as some classroom time.

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PRACTICA

Don't Wait for Spring, Do It Now

Clock Says It's Time to Renovate

Now is the time to do that home renovation project you've had on your agenda for nearly forever. Time factors definitely push us to renovate. The clock tells us we'll never get it done any sooner, and helps us push past the procrastination threshold.

The clock also tells us our nest has seen better days, and is showing signs of wear and tear that come with years. It's time for the application of some old-fashioned TLC.

The calendar motivates us to get out the paint brush. We may have decided to fix up the home, rather than sell during a real estate slump. We'll wait out the cycle and meanwhile make our home more appealing to a prospective buyer.

Kitchen and bathroom renovations give the highest return on investment when it comes to selling. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Appraisal Institute of Canada say that we can expect to recover 75 to 100 per cent of a kitchen or bathroom overhaul.

The next best investment is painting, and roof and heating



system replacements give high returns.

Maybe we feel at home here and want to stay, but our inner clocks tell us we need to make adjustments for lifestyle changes: Get rid of steps where possible, widen corridors, install easy-to-maintain flooring, turn an old playroom into an office, create convenient storage, add a bathroom, a sun room or a deck, turn the attic into a student suite.

The calendar may also suggest we need an updated look. Out with the blue-and-rose kitchen wallpaper with marching geese that scream 1980s, and the avocado shag in the den that evokes the 60s. In with hardwood and stainless steel. Out with country. In with contemporary.

We are being encouraged to do it now by the federal government's recently announced in-

centive — rebates for renovations. It's a beat-the-clock proposition because the boost must be used by the end of 2010.

Your renovation project may have been pushed by a puddle on the floor from a leaky roof, or a high heating bill that forced you to look at better insulation, or windows that grew clouded from broken seals. You may have decided on an energy retrofit to bring heating and cooling costs down. This could involve anything from caulking windows to installing new appliances.

Whatever our reasons, the renovation pendulum can swing between fun and nightmare. To tip the odds in favour of fun, CMHC urges us to ask key questions before we start: Is the renovation practical? Will you get your money's worth? Is it adaptable? Is it healthy?

Full homework can help you

answer yes to those questions. Check fact sheets at cmhc.ca to begin. The rewards of well-planned renovation range from a higher market value for your home to increased equity, improved comfort, more space, added convenience, aesthetic appeal, improved safety, energy and resource savings, greater privacy, healthier living environment, easier maintenance and the pleasure of a fresh new look.

Avoid unpleasant surprises by getting a systematic and thorough professional home inspection before you start a major renovation. Get two or three quotes from professional renovators. A 20 per cent cushion in your budget is a good idea, because remodelling is not like new construction. You can always expect a few surprises.

Avoid Money Pit Mistakes

Saskatoon is buzzing with hammers and saws as renovation goes into full swing.

"The renovation industry is vibrant right now," said Dave Anderchek of J.A.B.A. Construction. In mid-2008 when real estate took a dive, renovation slipped for awhile also, but it picked up in January, 2009, and within a month was back to normal, added Anderchek.



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J.A.B.A. is as busy as ever, although the renovation market has changed. Not as many Saskatoon homeowners are doing additions; they're concentrating on exterior and interior makeovers. Something as simple as moisture in the attic can push a renovation, said Anderchek, because if problems like this are neglected they only make bigger headaches. Renovations commonly range from \$1,000 to \$500,000.

Anderchek has 20 years of experience in the business and offers advice to help you get a satisfying outcome.

"Most people don't know exactly what they want to do. We tell them - go shopping - and then tell us what you want and we can set a realistic budget," he said.

Don't you just love to be told to go shopping? Seriously, that's how you'll be able to get specific about what kind of flooring, cabinets, countertops, etc. that you want. Put the time into careful product research.

Then, Anderchek or another reputable renovator can put a plan together for you, and coordinate subcontractors. "We will work with you to make sure you get what you want," Anderchek added.

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Realtors**Barry Chilliak Realty Inc.**

Lynn LeMesurier

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F: 306.343.0432

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W: www.chilliakrealty.com

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BACKWORDS

Believable Boosterism Good Reasons Why We're Booming

It's a gross understatement to say 2008 was a remarkable year for the Saskatchewan economy. Even if the economy in the United States hadn't collapsed (largely due to the greed of those in the unregulated home mortgage industry), the Saskatchewan economy would still be a bright light on a global scale.

The numbers add up to one conclusion - It's our turn to lead the nation.

Not since the heady days of the roaring 1920s, when Saskatchewan was Canada's third most populated province and boasted a manufacturing sector that included automobile plants, has it been considered the place to be for economic action.

Premier Brad Wall believes that because of actions his government took in 2008, our province is well-positioned to continue strong and steady growth this year and beyond.

"We will not be immune from the market turmoil and since commodity prices are significantly lower, 2009 may not be as impressive as this year," Wall said in his year end review.

"However, it's very important for everyone to remember this - there will still be growth in Saskatchewan, and relative to the rest of the world our economic performance will be very strong."

Wall pointed to figures released in December that Saskatchewan's economy continued to be strong and steady.

Retail trade was up 12.9 per cent (unadjusted) - the largest percentage increase among provinces.

Exports were up more than 90 per cent compared to last October - the highest percentage increase among provinces and five times the national increase;

Wholesale trade was up 40 per cent compared to the year previous - the largest increase in Canada.

Manufacturing sales were up 16 per cent over the year, the second highest percentage growth rate in the country.

All independent forecasts show Saskatchewan leading the country in economic growth in 2008.

Since the beginning of October, five independent forecasters have concluded Saskatchewan will also lead the country in economic growth in 2009.

In the 12-month period, end-

ing October 31st, Saskatchewan's population grew by 15,007.

"This growth will be further cemented by infrastructure investments in the province by our government and the federal government - investments designed to further strengthen our economy while creating a short-term stimulus," Wall said.

"In addition, the tax cuts, infrastructure spending and debt reduction our government announced in October will further stimulate the economy in the coming year."

Figures prepared by Saskatchewan Finance said the government action announced in October will increase nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth by 1.3 per cent in 2009 and a further 1.0 per cent in 2010.

Saskatchewan Finance has said the October tax, infrastructure and debt reduction package

will add nearly 19,000 new jobs in 2009 and more than 10,000 in 2010.

It was the largest tax reduction in the history of Saskatchewan.

These historic income tax cuts will inject about \$600 million back into Saskatchewan taxpayers' pockets this year - \$300 million when we file our 2008 income tax returns and another \$300 million on our 2009 taxes.

"The task ahead for our province is to continue on the course we have set, so that we can continue to have the strongest economy in Canada," Wall said. "And we have to keep reminding ourselves that it really is a different story here in Saskatchewan."

Saskatchewan's oil production is second only in volume to Alberta among Canadian provinces and provides about 20% of all Canadian production.

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However, the Saskatchewan oil patch was the hottest in the country last year and for the first time ever, the annual revenue from the sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights in Saskatchewan topped \$1 billion.

The 2008 sales generated \$1.12 billion for the province. How hot was the hot oil patch last year? Consider this: the top five land sales in Saskatchewan history were the five that took place in 2008.

"These results cap what has been an extraordinary year of activity for our oil and gas industry," Energy and Resources Minister Bill Boyd said. "This billion-dollar investment in our province speaks volumes about the attractiveness of our oil and gas resources and industry's confidence in our investment climate."

"What is also significant is that many of the exploration licenses sold in 2008 and in 2007 have been for two-year terms, so that

industry will be quickly moving from land acquisition to drilling and exploration. And that's great news for all the suppliers and communities that prosper from our number one industry."

Meanwhile, the housing boom continued across the province.

Real estate sales in Saskatoon topped \$1 billion for a second consecutive year. In 2008, there was \$1.013 billion of residential real estate sold in Saskatoon, down two per cent from 2007 when \$1.033 billion was sold.

The 2008 average selling price was \$287,770, down from the highs experienced in May and June when the monthly average selling price topped \$300,000.

Data from the Association of Regina Realtors indicates the 2008 sales dollar volume was at an all-time high in the city at \$675.2 million, up 15 per cent from the previous high of \$586.7 million in 2007.

The average price of Regina homes sold increased to

\$240,104, up 38 per cent from the previous record of \$173,568 in 2007.

Real estate developers clearly have confidence in the future of the Regina and Saskatoon market places.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported that Saskatoon had 2,319 housing starts, down 2.6 per cent from the previous year.

Regina finished 2008 with 1,375 foundations poured, down a mere 1.6 per cent from the 1,398 starts recorded in 2007.

In Saskatoon, the 1,031 multiple starts were the highest were the highest in 25 years.

In Regina, there were 979 single-detached housing starts, the highest in 22 years.

With all of this economic activity likely to continue throughout 2009, it's not hard to conclude – it's definitely Saskatchewan's turn.

■ JOE RALKO



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